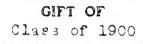
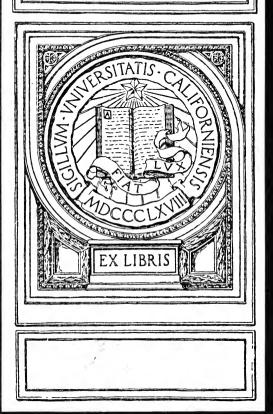
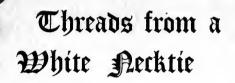
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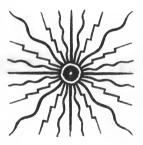


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Poems of Life

BY

BEN FRANKLIN BONNELL.



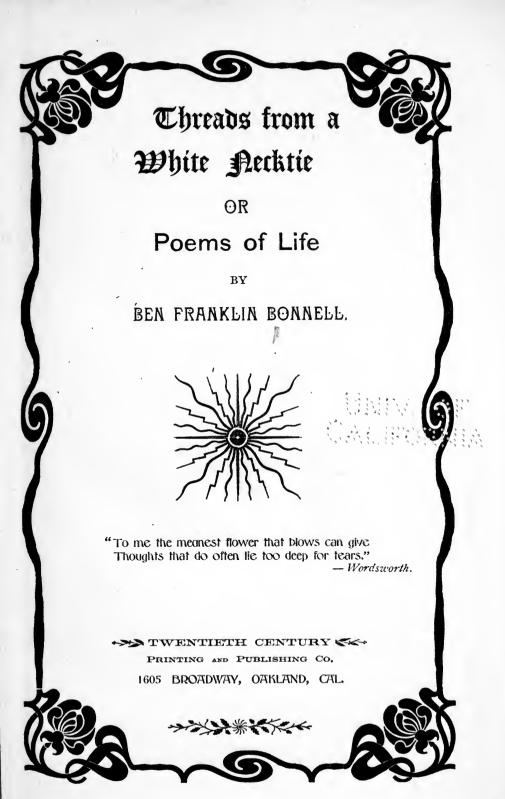
To me the meanest flower that blows can give Thoughts that do often lie too deep for tears."

— Wordsworth.

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TO VINU AMMONIJAŠ



Class of 1900

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In writing these few lines of introduction of this little booklet for my friend, the author, I will say that I consider it a noble ambition for one to wish to leave to the world his best thoughts. That one can not sing in a grand strain is no reason why he should not sing at all. It is the soft sweet music that reaches the soul. True poetry like true eloquence is very rare. It is some times grand and some times simple but always touching and tender. It springs from the imagination upon the gossamer wings of emotion and looking through the eyes of the soul far into the realms of unfading beauty it gathers its inspiration from the dreamland of meditation. Emerson says that poetry is the consolation of mortal men. It is more. It is the inspiration of the soul. If one who has been manly, courageous, unselfish and faithful in performing the duties of life shall pause to sing for us, will we not listen and be grateful.

If we always look upon the poetic side of life we can make it one grand sweet song. A realm of love and transcendent beauty where happiness ever abides. If the author has assisted in making the world better and brighter, he will be loved and his name remembered long after his voice has ceased to be heard.

OAKLAND, CAL.
June, 1902.

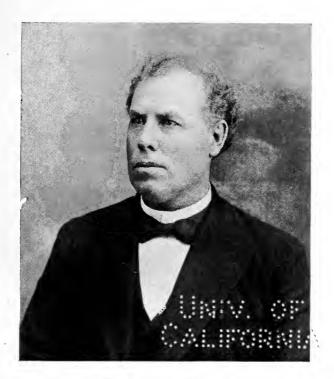
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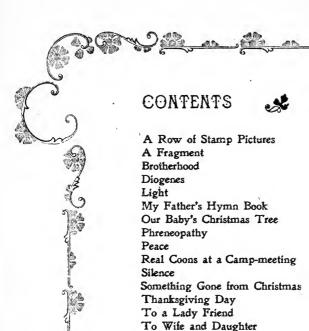


O ELIZA ALFARATA, my beloved wife and soulfriend, I dedicate this little volumn, as a small tribute to her devotion and encouragement under all the circumstances of life.

BEN FRANKLIN BONNELL.



Ben Franklin Bonnell.



The Evolution of Man

The Transcendentalists
The Priest and the Poet
The Man of Galilee

What? We Believe Why?



WHY?

tried to know why men and women toiled;
Why they rose early and continued late;
Why they wove, and ploughed, and bought and sold.

I wondered why my father looked so sad When crops failed, horses died, or cattle strayed; Or when the price was low on what he sold.

I wondered why my mother said, with clouded brow, "I have no time for this pleasure, or that; But must devote my time to work and home."

I wondered why each day of all the year Came loaded with its toils and cares; Why men sought eargerly the load.

In respite from the water-jug and sheaf I sought the brook below the meadow field, Where birds and flowers no care nor sorrow know,

I wondered why the cornfield needed hoe When flowers grew so perfect of themselves; And birds depended on no dinner horn.

Called from my childish reverie by the brook, I harried through the cornfield home;
The broken stock which I hoed was dead;
But the thistle I had killed was growing green,

I wondered why it was (for so it always was) That when my little brothers came They found my mother sick in bed.

I asked my mother how the hickory trees Could bear such fruit without our work or care; She said: "The Lord takes care of hickory trees."

I asked her how the birds in snow and sleet, Found food and shelter, and she said: "The Lord takes care of birds, my son."

I asked her what the preacher meant
On a Sunday morn long ago,
By saying: "Man is better than the birds."
And why, if so, God does not feed him, too.
She smiled and said, 'twas easy to explain,
But I should wait till I was older grown,
And then I better understand.

One day I asked her if they'd have to kill Our neighbor who had fallen from his horse, And broken arm and both his legs; All present, but my mother, laughed aloud, And I in shame sought refuge by the brook, And waited till the company went home.

I wondered why they killed poor old blind Bob,
Our horse, that blundered through the bridge
And struggled till he broke his stifle joint;
My mother sought me and explained as best she could,
That God had given beasts to men to use;
To kill them were a mercy often times;
But men were holier if they suffered, so she said.

She told me to be patient, and sometime
I'd go to school, and learn about such things;
That she and father had not been to school.
I wept; but not for shame; and asked her to explain
What is school? and where? and who knew more than she
And must I leave the brook and her, and go to school?

Her voice was tender and her face was sad; Just as it was the night my little brother died; "In town," she said, "are wise men teaching boys." I slept, as tired children sleep, but dreamed Of towns and schools and wise men teaching boys; The dream was real, but she dear soul, sleeps on.

I went to town and studied in the schools. The "wise men" taught me and I learned The noble things that men had thought and done.

From then till now I've pondered, thought and read; I've listened earnestly, when wise men spoke—But none so wise as mother, have I found.

What came within her little sacred circle, she Could tell me in her sweet and quiet way; And always when she told, I understood. What lay beyond her observation's range And I in curious boyish fancy pressed. She left with God, and said she could not tell.

I've listened to the wise, the learned, the good; But none like mother—in sweet simple faith, Has told me that "he does not, but God knows."

I've learned that men, like birds and hickory trees Are symbols of eternal truth and love—
That one is like the other—God in both.

I learned in childhood, while I lingered by the brook, That birds, and trees, and flowers are always true; No holier lesson have I learned since then.



LIGHT.

asked our preacher where the light, Four days before the sun, Came from; and he with holy spite, Said I was "making fun."

> I said, "I only want to know, And so have come to you;" He said he knew where I would go, Before my course is through.

He looked as though he knew the place, And gloried in the thought, That some day I would end my race On earth and find that spot.



Long years have passed, the light I sought, Shines through all space and time, And in its radience honest thought Has ceased to be a crime.



THANKSGIVING DAY.



OW down, proud nation, 'tis a day apart From every other day in all the year. Beware, if thou but feast and feed thy lust!

> Lift up thy soul to him who rules above, Nor once believe thy prowess has achieved The greatness told of thee the world around.

Be humble, oh, ye people, and behold His hand, In all that thou for freedom's name hath wrought, And not let pride deceive thee to thy fall.

While on thy knees, remember that when thou wast young, When hardships many were and pleasures few, Thy fathers bowed and thanked Him for His grace.

Oh, thou, this day, thy fathers' wisdom prove, And by thanksgiving for all pleasures past, Secure His guidance through dark days to come.



WHAT?



WISH I knew what hidden spring within Compels me to instinctively rebel Against so many well intended things.

There something in the sermon, prayer, and song. On Sunday, — all designed to do me good, That tells me they're invented and unreal.

What is it in the winds and swelling tides, And breakers dashing wildly at my feet, That tells me what no poet ever told?

> What is it from the secret depths within, That better than all Bibles from without, Beholds the narrow way of Peace and Love?

What gave the mountains the deep, solemn power, To speak so loudly to my listening soul, And never once the awful silence break?

What is it in the hyacinth and rose, When Science has its studied story told, That I can see and feel, but can't define?

What is it, when I stand with open life, Alone amid Earth's soul-inspiring scenes, That fills me with such infinite repose?

What gave the tinted Autumn-leaf the power To teach me what my noble race rejects,—
That death's more beautiful than life?



THE EVOLUTION OF MAN.

MARK WEST.

OME listen, I'll tell you an interesting tale You think you were made like a shoe, But you came from a microbe, the length of the scale, And God knows whether yet you are through.

You think you began at the top of the scale And have tumbled a little a—down But you're off just as slick as your primitive tail Of which not a scar can be found.

You're the sum of all microbes and rodents and bugs, And lizzards and snakes of the past When a bull-head you wheedled your gills into lugs, And your hair from your breeches you cast.

You may prate of creation, and tell of the place Where He made you and breathed you a soul, But your carcass declares that you came from a race Wiggled up from some dark puddle hole.

You poor silly creature, quit putting on airs, You distress us—who study the clan— You came all the way from the foot of the stairs, You are tadpole as much as you're man.



A FRAGMENT.

WO wild flowers, the white the red, together grew, No malice toward each other did they bear, But both seemed happy that God's garden gave them room. No quarrel engaged the grape-vine and the apple-tree,

They grew in close embrace, one sour the other sweet, I ate with childish glee their fruit, and climbed and loved them both



MY FATHER'S HYMN BOOK.



F all that was his, this one precious treasure
Remains to me now as a relic of home:
But the hymns as he sang them—the sweet solemn measure,
Can only through soul-swelling memories come.

I feel even now the strange mystic power That filled my young soul as I sat on his knee, While he sang: "How tedious and tasteless the hour When Jesus my Saviour, I no longer see."

His life was as sweet as a balmy May morning, Sparkling with dew-drops of heavenly grace; His home every day with some jewel adorning, As he greeted each member in loving embrace.

Tonight I'm a child, as sweet memories bind me To the home of my childhood, in days long ago, When his strong manly arms in affection entwined me And I learned through his love, his Redeemer to know.



SILENCE.

WO lovers sat silent where the shades of night
Like a mantel gathered near,
But they heeded it not, their hearts were light
As they thought of the future hopeful and bright
And their trust in each other so dear,
All was silent; not a sound the stillness broke
As her hand he fondly pressed,
She trembled, her heart throbbed, though not a word she spoke
But clung like the vine to the sturdy oak
With her head upon his breast.

They sat together where the shades of night
Like a mantle gathered near,
But they heeded it not, their lives were complete
They were wrapped in the present, so holy and sweet,
And their baby to them so dear.
All was silent; just a sound would their darling wake,
They had laid her in the crib to rest,
Not even a kiss from her lips could they take,
But while silence reigned for baby's sake
A dear head found its place on his breast.

They sat together where a deep, dark night
Like a mantel gathered near,
An angel took away their light
And a bank of flowers and a casket white
Held baby, oh! baby so dear!
All was silent; no sound could baby wake
They kneeled, her head on his breast,
They prayed, and a gleam of holy light
Pierced the gloom of that awful night
And a whisper: "Love and Rest."

Still they sit together where the shades of night
Like a mantle gathers near,
But they heed it not, they love and rest
With her silvery head drawn close to his breast,
And their trust in each other so dear,
All is silent; they are waiting for the last dark night
And the morning of love and rest,
Another gleam of holy light
And far beyond this world of night,
Three dear heads will lean on His breast.

SOMETHING GONE FROM CHRISTMAS.

(Lines written on a Christmas card entitled "To Absent Friends" and sent to wife and daughter):

OMETHING gone from Christmas only? No, 'tis gone from every day; Gone to-day, is gone to-morrow, Gone in joy is gone in sorrow, 'Tis my loved one far away.



TO A LADY FRIEND.



send this small volume for memory's sake, And as such you'll accept it I know, Of our pledge to be friends, as we stood by the lake Where the water hyacinths grow.

Forever impressed 'pon my life is a face
Looking upward from depths far below,
When you gave me your hand as you leaned o're the place
Where the water hyacinths grow.
Forever and ever, ah may it be so
That no blight to our friendship e'er come,
When earth's chaos forbids that the hyacinths grow
May our spirits in friendship be one.

We treasure your gift, the blushing carnations, For their own fragrant selves, but the love that they bore, Is sweeter than all of earth's floral creatures. Will endure when earth's flowers yield fragrance no more.



BROTHERHOOD.



E is not my brother simply because His creed and mine are one, Fraternity's bound to higher laws Than that he is my father's son.

I am brother to him, for whom my souls yearns, He is mine, whose soul replies, We could not be brothers on other terms Were he to come from the skies.



THE PRIEST AND THE POET.



priest at the foot of the ladder stood weeping, A poet stood smiling at the head of the stair; Said the priest to the singer: "I pray you to tell me The road that you traveled to get where you are?

"I have stood here as watchman and herald and shepherd, Since long years before you were born, night and day, There is only one road to the place you are standing, Bnd I know that you never ascended this way."

Said the poet, in turn, to the sad holy preacher: "You are right, I am sure, so rest and be calm, No ladder I climbed, no creed was my teacher, God made me up here, I was born where I am."



TO WIFE AND DAUGHTER.

(On the white leaf of a Volumn of Maurine.)



'VE seen across the mystic border land Where Lucile, Maurine and Undine were born; Sweet angels beckon me to join the band But some fell spirit of malignity and scorn Has sealed my lips and palsied my poor hand.

Two Angels in that holy adeu sweet Beguile me day by day to loftier heights, The golden stair awaits my unhallowed feet. Christ, help me that this land of pure delights May be our resting place in Thee complete.



A ROW OF STAMP PICTURES.



HE first one says: "I'm myself you see And no one on earth I'd rather be." The second says: "I'm satisfied, I'm my Mama's joy and Papa's pride."

The third one: "Life has its toil and care, And I am willing to take my share," And whether joy or sorrow come I'll be the sunlight of our home." The fourth one: "I am here with all my heart, Though the picture man left out a part."



Thou art thyself dear one, and yet Two other lives unite in thee, We're one on earth, 'twill thus beget Sweet oneness in eternity.



THE TRANSCENDENTALISTS.



HOU bold, intrepid Whitman, thou with leaves of grass Could Intuition's holy cause give form,
Thy soul could rise from leaves and flowers, and pass
With holy rapture, through the thunder-riven storm.

Sweet Emerson, thou sun of beauty, grace and truth, Thy gentle spirit yet will teach the race To find eternal spring—perennial youth Within the soul—God's holy temple dwelling place.

Blind Realism, in its lust and sensuous pride Blasphemes the dignity you gave to mau, But God, like music, in the soul abides, And all who feel His presence, know salvation's plan.

Ye Transcendentalists of every age and clime, True Vanguard of pure knowledge of the soul, Your tune too high was pitched, your age to chime, But ever onward will the cadence sweetly roll.



PEACE.



counciled Buddha and the eight-fold path Through Karma to Nirvana opened wide, But like a dream remembered—far away, Hanging within a wreath of fleecy cloud, But nowhere touching hill or vale for me, Was open gate to lead me on the way.

To Zoroaster then I turned in hope, That he my soul from sorrow would set free; He pointed me to Ormuzd, who beyond The purifying flames on throne of light, Gave no release till fire had purged the dross, And freed the soul from taint of mortal clay.

I sought the church, but babel voices rang, Wild anathemas in each other's ears, Each proving by the word of God, his right To people hell with demons yet unborn, For God's own glory and for justice sake, To fill the souls of men with endless woe.

I sat alone where evening zephyrs played, Where sweet perfumes breathed out the closing day, And birds retiring chattered their delight.

Orion rose and took his trackless flight
Across the blue, arched dome of star-lit sky,
Turning sweet evening into solemn night.
No tempest followed, but a soothing calm
Possessed me, and my wakened soul was tuned
In harmony with God—the soul of all.

I 'rose, wet with the dew of silent night, But filled with joy and peace unspeakable, Resolved to meet the future with a smile, That moving in my own appointed way, My soul uplifted, and with God enthroned, I'd shed perfume on each departing day.



REAL COONS AT A CAMP-MEETING.



WO coons once sat on a hollow limb Listening to a camp-meeting hymn; They winked and looked in each other's face, As they heard the warbling tones of grace Roll out upon the evening air, To tell that their names were written there. No gold nor silver did they crave, The kingdom only would they have; The old coon coughed and wiped his eye And said to his mate "I hope to die If those singin', prayin' mal-contente Wouldn't pull our hides for fifteen cents, If only they had eyes to see Where we are hid in this hollow tree.



A well-fed hen in a coop near by Looked up, and a tear drop dimmed her eye; "Would God I were as you now be, Skin and bone in a hollow tree!"



WE BELIEVE.



million people never yet believed

The one thing nor the other just alike,

And never will while earth and time endure.

One thinks, and then with life and soul proclaims His creed, inspired by some immortal breath, A million more accept it on his word.

A thousand generations come and go, Each one professing that the first man's thought Was not of man, but God's word to the race.

Thus "we believe" stands for belief of one, And with the million others means consent, All men are melted into one man's mould.



PHRENEOPATHY.

started in to try it,
And now I'm standing by it,
I'll let who will deny it,
It's all the same to me;
The doctor says I've blundered,
And the preacher at me thundered
But I save each year five hundred,
And am happy, well and free.



A MOTHER'S MEETING

others at a mother's meeting, Children playing on the street; She with other mothers seeking, Downy paths for little feet.

The work is done, the path selected, Flower lined, with roses blown; But the little dears neglected, Have a pathway of their own.

Better hold your mother's meeting With the children—home to-day; Be a child their mischief greeting, Soon your chance will pass away.

Condescend to know their sorrow, Understand them while you may, And their dimples will tomorrow, Bewhere your wrinkles are to-day.



OUR BABY'S CHRISTMAS TREE.



HIS tree is loaded with true love, No other treasure here is seen, But let its barren branches prove At least that love is ever-green.

Did wealth within our purse reside, The tree beneath its load would break, For every wind and train and tide Would bring some treasure for your sake.



THE MAN OF GALILEE



IS said the Hebrew prophets did foretell
The story of the Man of Galilee,
Before His life began upon the earth;
That shepherds on the plains of Bethlehem,
Beheld sweet angels from their home above,
And heard them tell the story of our hope.

'Tis said that Simeon and Annie old,
Who lived within the temple of their God,
Foretold that He would save the world from sin.
We're told that angels in His father's ears,
Foretold the anger of Judea's king,
While he upon his lowly pallet slept,
That he in fright arose and slept no more,
Until the Holy Child was safe beyond
The reach of all who sought to do Him harm.

'Tis written that the Child of earth and heaven, Lived in subjection to His parents' will, And ne'er but once His will to theirs opposed; And grew in grace and stature every day, Until He reached His thirtieth year of life, When He proclaimed His hour had fully come, To lift the world in love's sublime embrace.

One sent of God, 'neath Jordan's crystal flood Baptized him as the man of Galilee; But raised Him up to hear the voice of God Proclaim Him as His well beloved Son.

The blessed Spirit like a Dove came down And led Him forth, the wilderness within, To meet and struggle with the prince of sin; He met him in ambition, pride and lust, Defeated all his plans for human shame, By trusting God and serving Him alone.

Through forty days of sorrow—sick and sore, He fought the tempter with the Word of God, Nor used His power, His hunger to abate; But afterwards He used His gracious power, To feed five thousand hungry men at once, And cure their hungry breaking hearts as well.

He still'd the tempest and the storm toss'd sea, He healed the leper and gave sight to men, Who from their birth were blind until that hour. He opened ears that never sound had heard, And called the dead forth from their tombs alive, To witness Him as God's annointed Son.

In three short years He filled the world with awe! No word He wrote, but from His gracious lips, Fell words that filled the souls of men wi;h hope. Some said, "He speaks as one of God possessed," Some said, "The devil is His source of power," He said, "I came my Fa;her's will to do."

God as His Father and Himself a King,
His enemies accused as blasphemy,
And after mocking Him they nailed Him fast,
And let Him die upon the cruel tree.
He said it was the holy will of God
That He should thus be put to shame by men
And bear their shame, in turn, and set them free.

'Tis said, He died, 'mid taunts, with broken heart, A Roman spear was thrust into His side; They laid His body in a friend's new tomb, But on the morning of the third day He Arose, and put the Roman guard to flight, Then after forty days to heaven returned.



Thus ends the story of His earthly life, All wrapt in mystery of love's own choice And told and told again and lastly writ, By those, 'tis said on whom the Spirit came,

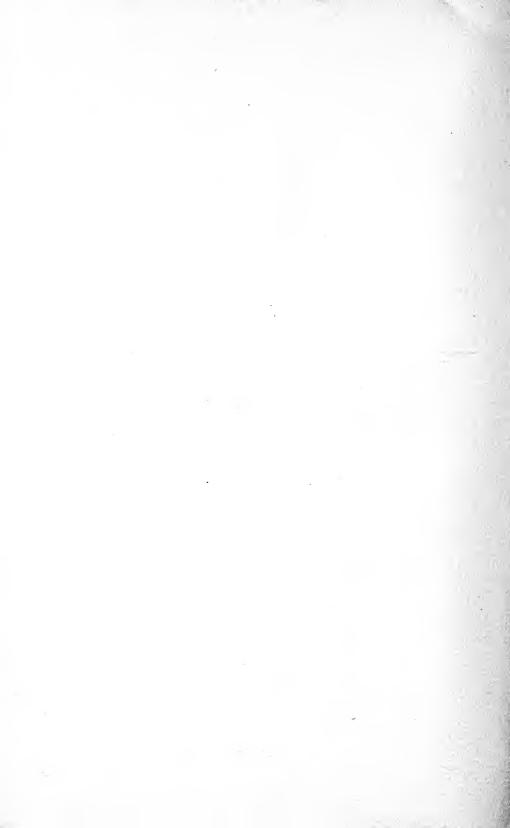
The centuries between His life and mine, Forbid that I this mystery explore, I can but doubt, believe, re-read, re-doubt, And then believe once more with all my heart.

I would believe the story as 'tis told,
If reason would submit to love's demands;
But reason often turns my thoughts away
And leaves my love to struggle with my doubts.

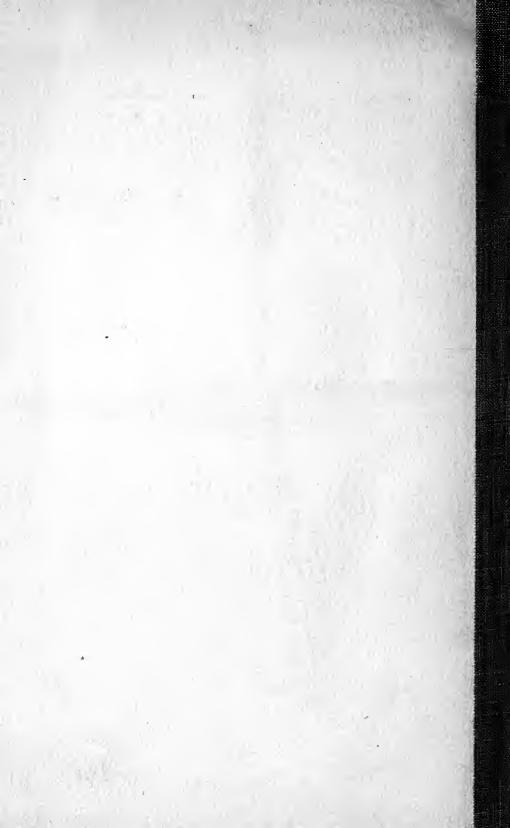
But why should reason hold so high a place? My understanding's not from reason's choice; The God within me knows Himself divine, And thus defies cold reason's princely claim.

My soul believes that once in Galilee
There lived a lowly peasant, who was more
Than man has been, on earth, since time began.
That He without an earthly father was
Begotten, and of a pure virgin born,
Tells not the story of His mighty power.
No miracle recorded with His name,
No virgin birth, nor resurrection day
Proclaims Him Godlike—'tis His Love alone.









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